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POE IN CAROLINA

BY HERVEY ALLEN

I

ALCHEMY

Some souls are strangers in this bourne;
Beauty is born from such men's discontent;
Earth's grass and stones,
Her seas, her forests, and her air
Are seas and forests till they mirror on some pool
Unusually reflecting in an exile's mind,
Who tarries here protesting and alone;
And then they get strange shapes from memories of other stars
The banished knew, or spheres he dreams will be.
Thus is the five-fold vision of the earth recast
By ghostly alchemy.

But there are favored spots
Where all earth's moods conspire to make a show
Of things to be transmuted into beauty
By alchemic minds.
Such is this island beach where Poe once walked,¹
And heard the melic throbbing of the sea,
With muffled sound of harbor bells—
Bells—he loved bells!
And here are drifting ghosts of city chimes
Come over water through the evening mist,
Like knells from death-ships off the coast of spectral lands.

I think some dusk their metal voices
Yet will call him back
To walk upon this magic beach again,
While Grief holds carnival upon the harbor bar.

¹ During the winter of 1828-29, Poe was stationed, while serving in the army, as a soldier at Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island, S. C. While there he read Moore, wrote part of *Al Aaraaf*, and found the strange beetle which suggested the story of the *Gold Bug*, the scene of which is laid on the island.

Heralded by ravens from another air,
The master will pass, pacing here,
Wrapped in a cape dark as the unborn moon.
There will be lightning underneath a star;
And he will speak to me
Of archipelagoes forgot,
Atolls in sailless seas, where dreams have married thought.

II

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

Once all the ancient woodlands of this coast
For you held ghouls and melancholy ghosts—
That year
You walked by the dank tarns of Auber
And dreamed in these regions of Weir.
For you, among these myrtles drab,
Sounded the weird pipes of Syrinx.
One midnight, when a sphinx
Showed you the living scarab
With death's face, we call the goldbug,
And with head against drear breast
You drank strange milk cold from her demon's dug,
This was the place.